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SUBJECT: GHANA HOLDS NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM IN ADVANCE OF
COPENHAGEN

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1. (U) SUMMARY: On December 2, Ghana held its National Climate Change Forum in advance of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen. Environment, Science and Technology Minister Sherry Ayithey announced that Ghanaian President John Evans Atta Mills would attend the Copenhagen Summit. Both the minister and Ghanaian Vice President John Dramani Mahama made clear that Ghana would seek substantial financial and technical assistance from the developed world to cope with the impacts of climate change, whose costs could reach \$300-400 million per year in Ghana. Encouragingly, the VP also argued that Ghanaians needed to adopt more energy efficient lifestyles, and he announced that the country would launch a large scale reforestation and afforestation program in 2010. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On December 2, Ghana held its National Climate Change Forum in preparation for the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit.

Ghana Wants a Fair Deal and Assistance

3. (U) Environment, Science and Technology Minister Sherry Ayithey announced that President John Evans Atta Mills would attend the Copenhagen Summit. She said that Ghana would seek a "fair, equitable and just deal" at Copenhagen that includes substantial financial and technical assistance and capacity building from the developed world to help the country cope with the effects of climate change. She noted that the costs of mitigating and adapting to climate change could be in the range of \$300-\$400 million per year between 2010 and 2050, including addressing issues of agricultural practices, water resource management, migration and erosion.

VP's Keynote Address

4. (U) In his keynote address, Ghanaian Vice President John Dramani Mahama began by noting that Africa is responsible for only three percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, but the continent is a "hotspot" where climate change impacts could be the greatest, financial resources are already strained, and the current capacity to cope with the problem is very limited. Accordingly, developed countries will need to scale up their assistance to developing countries, including Ghana, to help them undertake climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

5. (U) The VP also repeated familiar Africa Group and G77 demands that developed countries should commit to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2020. At the same time, he argued that Ghanaians should be encouraged in the coming years to

adopt more environmentally sound lifestyles (e.g., through the use of energy efficient light bulbs), and the country should seek to generate more power from wind, solar and other renewable sources of energy. In addition, he noted that Ghana would launch a "massive" reforestation and afforestation program in 2010.

Will Cocoa Become the Ghanaian Polar Bear?

¶6. (U) Mr. E. O. Nsenkyire, the Chairman of Ghana's National Climate Change Committee, noted that the committee is currently preparing the country's national climate change mitigation and adaptation plan. He also warned that cocoa could be the "Ghanaian Polar Bear." If current trends continue unchecked, cocoa might not grow at all in Ghana by 2080, because of the cocoa plant's sensitivities to temperature changes and sunlight conditions. Some 800,000 small households dependent on cocoa farming for their livelihoods could be affected, in addition to the fact that 63% of foreign agricultural export revenues are derived from cocoa.

Ghana Must be More Environmentally Responsible

¶7. (U) Okyehene Osagyefuo Amoatia Ofori Panin II, an Eastern Region traditional ruler who has been very active on environmental causes, urged Ghanaians to behave with more environmental responsibility and to try and live more in harmony with nature. He pointed out that the air and water, "the two liquids that sustain us," have become the "national garbage cans," with air pollution rampant, and solid and liquid waste management in an "appalling" state in Ghana. He argued that gold mining was poisoning Ghana's water resources and

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breeding more mosquitoes, exacerbating the country's serious malaria problem. He also warned that overpopulation could become a major cause of environmental degradation, and Ghana should adopt policies that would lead to a drop in the total fertility rate and help to cap Ghana's population at no more than 24 million people.

¶8. (U) Ghana would need to state its case for assistance at Copenhagen clearly and forcefully, he noted, even though Ghana would be negotiating with "the guys who already give us aid," and it is difficult to "fight a man and beg him at the same time."

Keep a Constructive Tone at Copenhagen

¶9. (U) Togolese Ambassador to Ghana Jean-Pierre Gbikpi-Benissan, the dean of the Accra diplomatic corps, appealed for "serenity to prevail over passions" at the Copenhagen Summit. In his view, a constructive approach was most likely to lead to a successful climate change deal.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) Encouragingly, Ghana's National Climate Change Forum was not simply an exercise in blaming developed countries for global warming and demanding massive amounts of assistance to cope with the effects of climate change. Both the VP and Okyehene were careful to balance their remarks and to point out ways in which Ghanaians themselves could help to begin solving the climate change problem and to improve the environment in Ghana.

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